THE EFFECTS OF GRAMMAR MASTERY AND CRITICAL THINKING ON STUDENT'S DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILL

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to find out the effect of grammar mastery and critical thinking on student's descriptive writing skill. The research method was a survey research. The research sample included ninety students and were selected through random sampling at a private senior high school in Karawang. The research instruments consisted of test and questionnaire. The result indicated that (1) both grammars learned by student and critical thinking ability affect the student's writing skill as evidenced by the $F_{count} = 339.539$ and significance value $(0.000 < 0.05)$. The grammar also affects the student's descriptive writing skill as shown by by $t_{count} = 26.037$ and significance value $(0.000 < 0.05)$. Finally, critical thinking ability has no effect on the student's descriptive writing skill, as indicated by $t_{count} = 0.858$ and significance value $(0.393 > 0.05)$.

Keywords: *Grammar Mastery, Critical Thinking, Descriptive Writing*.

INTRODUCTION

Language plays an important role in human life. One tries to acquire, learn, and use it as a means of communication, and simultaneously as a social symbol of humanity (Alwasilah, 1993, p.8). By using language, one can make statements. Convey facts and knowledge explain or report something, and keep social relations among language users (Halliday in Brown, 1994, p.232-233). These indicate that by using language people can express their ides, feeling, information, etc. through communication. Moreover, at present, many people can speak more than one language. They master not only their native language but also foreign languages such as English, French, Dutch, etc. there are many reasons why people attempt to learn languages. They are namely for finding a job, travelling, doing business, doing research, taking examination, reading books written in foreign languages, and writing in the foreign languages, etc. in such developing country like Indonesia, English has an important role such as in science and technology, for developing relationship in the international forum, for reading English books especially for the students, from primary school up to colleges.

Mastering English is obtained through a variety of teaching program in school. Experience showed that the results of learning English at school in Indonesia are still far from desire goals. One of the main problems in learning English in formal education at school today is not learnt well by the students, as if English is still regarded by frightening specter. Evidently can be seen by the result of students learn, they cannot master their English well. This accomplishment, of course, teaching learning activities are still using conventional, so it does not touch the students' need.

It means learning the language is still dominated by the teacher centered and does not provide the access for students to develop independently through critical thinking process. In many curriculum documents, the lecturer need to encouraged or require to develop their students' critical thinking., it is hoped to the students how to used their cognitive skill maximize, such as remember, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These entire called cognitive domain Blooms' Taxonomy; it makes students using their language with accuracy, clarity, and discernment.

As we know, English has four basic skills, including reading, listening, speaking and writing. All four skills are important to be learnt. Grammar is one of the important parts that students need to master when studying English. Scott Thornbury (2007) stated that grammar is partly the study of what forms (or structure) are possible in language. Traditionally, grammar has been concerned almost exclusively with analysis at the level of the sentence. Thus a grammar is a description of the rules that govern how a language's sentences are form.

Wilga M. Rivers (1981) defined grammar as the rules of a language set out in a terminologi which is hard to remember, with many exception appended to each rule. Carter, Ronald and McCarthy Michael, (2008) Grammar as Structure means: What rule does one to know in order to constcuct a sentence or clause appropriately? Gammar does not exist separately fro,m other levels of language, there is closed link between grammar and lexis that is given to the meaning, structure and formation of individual words.

Language skills are closely related to the ability to think. Learning language often reflects his thoughts. The more critics

think the brighter and clearer way of thinking this ability can be obtained with practice and guidance. Similarly, with writing skill that has to be obtained by the process of learning or practicing perseverance. Writing skill may not only just through theory, but should diligently study and practice. Good writing sill produce a good essay, in this case is a descriptive writing.

It is necessary to know that writing is a process, it is meant to practice, but the students do not it often. Writing process composition contents of composition or forming a part of mind of the message that is delivered to the reader by the researcher. If the sentence contains in paragraph that does not clear to explain and is not good arrangement, it will make the reader difficult to catch the mind's writer. A composition that arrange well-structured essay always contains three of elements main parts: introduction, body, and the conclusion. In fact, many students do the essay writing do not arrange well-structures ones.

Grammar, which is one of the important aspects in learning, should be mastered by the students because without sufficient understanding and mastery of that aspect, one cannot use the target language learnt in both written and oral communication. In other words, understanding on the correct grammatical rules is a prerequisite for someone to be considered as having communicative competences.

This notion is also supported by some other experts, like Harmer (2007) who states that grammatical knowledge is very important for learners who want to have communicative competence with good understanding on grammatical concepts; learners can avoid the use of incorrect students.

Furthermore, if the students who want to master English, they have to learn many grammatical aspects, because grammar is the fundamental organizing principle of language. The English grammatical ability is extraordinary. It is probably the most creative ability. There is no limit to what we can say or write, yet all these potentials are controlled by a finite number of rules. Learning about English grammar provides a basis for learning language such as: tenses, subject verb agreement, proper used of conjunction, parallel structure, kinds of sentences, and sentence patterns.

One of the ways to master English is to train through writing skill that requires being practice repeatedly. No one learn to write automatically, even write a single letter of the alphabet without a conscious effort of mind and hand, and to get beyond a single letter, that must be shown how to form words, how to put words together into sentences, and how to punctuate those sentences.

Writing does have one big advantage over speaking. Writing is not just production of text, it is also a learning and thinking process in which writer may discover what they think as a result of composing. It gives time to think, to try out the ideas on papers, to choose the proper words, to rethink, to revise, and rearrange it, and most importantly, to consider its effect on a reader. Writing gives one time to find the best possible way of starting what it means. The more one study on the craft of writing, the better it will use writing time. These are the reasons why the researcher is interested in conducting the research titled The effect of grammar mastery and critical thinking towards student's descriptive writing skill (Survey at private senior high school in Karawang).

From the explanations above, the objectives of the research were to know: (1) the effects of grammar mastery and critical thinking towards student's descriptive writing skill at private senior high school in Karawang (2) the effect of grammar mastery towards the student's descriptive writing skill at private senior high school in Karawang (3) the effect of critical thinking towards student's descriptive writing skill at private senior high school in Karawang

This research is a survey research. James and Sally (2001, p.1) assert that surveys are used to learn about people's attitudes, beliefs, values, demographics, behavior, opinions, habits, desires, ideas, and other types of information. They add the most surveys describe the incidence, frequency, and distribution of the characteristics of an identified population.

In addition to being descriptive, surveys can also be used to explore relationship between variables, or in an explanatory way. In addition, Louis et.al (2007, p.2) assert that surveys can be explanatory, in which no assumption or models are postulated, and in which relationship and pattern are explored (e.g. through relationship, regression, stepwise regression, and factor analysis). They can also be confirmatory, in which a model, causal relationship or hypothesis is tested.

Based on the above description on the nature of surveys, it can be concluded that survey is one of the most common research methods in social science and education by collecting large amount of data to explore relationship between variables in an explanatory way.

METHOD

The researcher selected 30 students from three schools; named Private Senior High School Kosgoro, Anwarul Hidayah, and Nihayatul Amal in Karawang. As a result, 90 students in tenth grade in the second semester of 2013/2014 academic year. There are several instruments which are used in this research in outlining the relationship between two independent varibles and one dependent variable; namely (a) multiple-choice test to measure knowledge of grammar mastery level, (b) multiple-choice test to measure cognitive in critical thinking level, and (c) writing essay test to measure student's ability in terms of descriptive writing skill.

There are three data analysis technique, namely: (1) The Descriptive Analysis Data is done by presenting the data in the form of frequency distribution table, polygon graphic, and also histogram for each research variable. Furthermore, for each group of data will be processed and analyzed about the size of mean, median, mode, standard of deviation, skewers, and kurtosis. For the descriptive data processing, the tabulation is performed by SPSS version 16.0 for Window; (2) The Prerequisite Test for Data Analysis are done to find out whether the collected data is worthily enough to be analyzed later on by using statistical tool. The prerequisite test is normality test and linearity test. For the research, the prerequisite tests are performed by using SPSS version 16.0 for Windows; and (3) The Testing Hypothesis are fulfilled and known that the data is proper to be tabulated and to be tested by using the hypothesis that has been proposed. The hypothesis by using the partial correlation technique and double correlation, and also a simple linear regression and double linear regression. In practical, for the calculation and testing the correlation and regression partially or double by using SPSS version 16.0 for Windows.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Description of Data
Descriptive Writing Skill Variable

SPSS output results in a descriptive writing skills variable is shown in the output Table 1. Table 1 shows that the highest value of 80 and 35 the lowest value, with a range of 45 points. Average of 60.93; median of 60, mode of 52, and standard deviation of 11.784. These results can be said that the students' writing ability is low, given the average, median and mode obtained is very small when compared with the maximum score that can be obtained by students in the writing ability of this variable is 100. Frequency histogram and table can be shown through Figure 1 below:
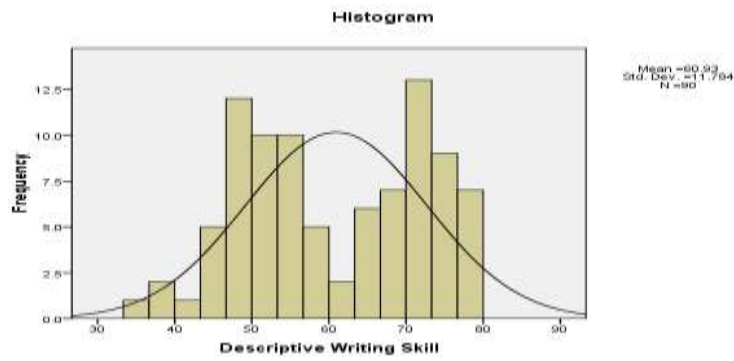
Figure 1. *Histogram of writing skill variable*

Table 1. *Statistic of result descriptive writing skill variable*

N	Valid	90
	Missing	0
Mean		60.93
Std. Error of Mean		1.242
Median		60.00
Mode		52[a]
Std. Deviation		11.784
Variance		138.872
Skewness		-.063
Std. Error of Skewness		.254
Kurtosis		-1.251
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.503
Range		45
Minimum		35
Maximum		80
Sum		5484

Grammar Mastery Variable

SPSS output for the descriptive grammar variable mastery variable shown in the output Table 2. The table above shows that the highest value of 58 and the lowest value 13, with a range of 45 points. 39.49 averages; 41 median; 27 modes, and 11.637 standard deviation. These results, it can be said that the acquisition of students' grammar classified as low, given the average, median and mode obtained is very small when compared with the maximum score that can be obtained by students in the grammar mastery variable is 100. Frequency histogram and table can be shown in Figure 2.

Table 2. *Statistic of result descriptive grammar mastery variable*

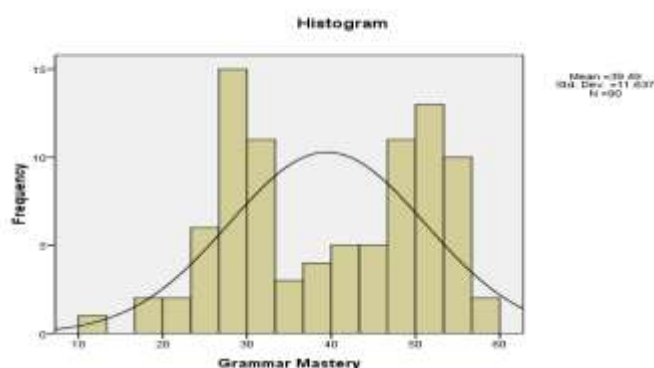| N	Valid	90
	Missing	0
Mean		39.49
Std. Error of Mean		1.227
Median		41.00
Mode		27[a]
Std. Deviation		11.637
Variance		135.421
Skewness		-.140
Std. Error of Skewness		.254
Kurtosis		-1.298
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.503
Range		45
Minimum		13
Maximum		58
Sum		3554

Figure 2. *Histogram of grammar mastery variable*

Critical Thinking Variable

Descriptively SPSS output for critical thinking variables shown in Table 3. Table 3 shows that the highest value of 92 and the lowest value of 65, with a range of 27 points. 78,38 averages, 79 of median, 83 of mode, and 5,157 of standard deviation. These results, we can say that critical thinking skill of students classified as high, considering the average, median and mode are obtained by more than half the maximum score when compared with the maximum score that can be obtained by students in the critical thinking of this variable is 100. Frequency histogram and table can be shown in Figure 3.

Table 3. *Statistic of Result Descriptive Critical Thinking Variable*

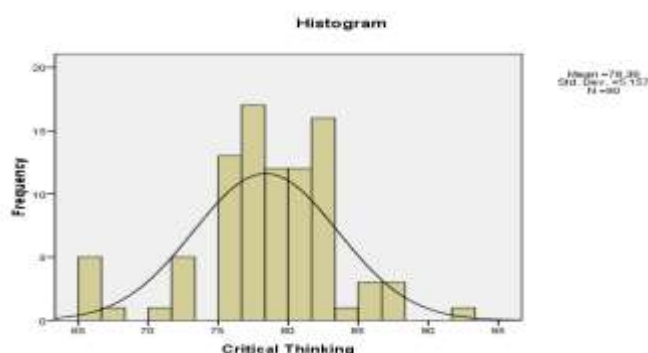| N	Valid	90
	Missing	0
Mean		78.38
Std. Error of Mean		.544
Median		79.00
Mode		83
Std. Deviation		5.157
Variance		26.597
Skewness		-.667
Std. Error of Skewness		.254
Kurtosis		1.199
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.503
Range		27
Minimum		65
Maximum		92
Sum		7054

Figure 3. *Histogram of critical thinking variable*

Test of Analysis Data Requirements

Normality test
The data processing, critical thinking values obtained sig = 0.132; value grammar mastery sig = 0.057; and writing skill value sig = 0.091. These results, it can be concluded that all variables are normally distributed, so parametric statistical analysis can be performed.

Linearity test
The data calculations X_1 (grammar mastery) to Y (student's descriptive writing skil), the value obtained sig = 0.243; it can be concluded that the regression equation formed is linear.

The data calculations X_2 (critical thinking) to Y (student's descriptive writing skill), the value obtained sig = 0.149; it can be concluded that the linear regression equation is formed.

Multicollinearity test
The data shown that values for both variables at 1.006; it can be concluded multicollinearity did not occur, and test of hypotheses using multiple linear regressions can be performed.

Test of Research Hypothesis
After doing the testing requirements of data analysis, then performed test of research hypothesis using correlation and multiple

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regression. Processing of the data showed as the following results:

Table 4. *Multiple of correlation coefficient model summary[b]*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.942[a]	.886	.884	4.017

a. Predictors: (Constant), Critical Thinking, Grammar Mastery

Table 5. *Result of Significant Regression Test ANOVA[b]*

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10955.975	2	5477.987	339.539	.000[a]
	Residual	1403.625	87	16.134		
	Total	12359.600	89			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Critical Thinking, Grammar Mastery
b. Dependent Variable: Descriptive Writing Skill

Table 6. *Calculating of equation multiple regressions coefficients (a)*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	17.646	6.786		2.608	.011
	Grammar Mastery	.955	.037	.943	26.037	.000
	Critical Thinking	.071	.083	.031	.858	.393

a. Dependent Variable: Descriptive Writing Skill

The model summary table, multiple correlation values obtained between the two independent variables with dependent variable of 0.942; it does show a high or strong correlation. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination or the effects of the two independent variables on the dependent variable is only at 88,6%, which means that variations in students' writing is given by the variable ability to think critically and mastery of the grammar of 88,6%, while the rest is influenced by other factors not discussed in this study.

The ANOVA table shown that the value of Sig. for both independent variables are 0.000; this value is less than 0.05, so it can be concluded H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. Or in another sense, this study found that there are effect both of grammar mastery and critical thinking towards student's descriptive writing skill.

The coefficients table, the coefficients obtained regression equation Y = 17.646 + 0.955 X2 + 0.071 X1. This regression equation means that, if the ability to think critically and mastery of grammar is ignored, then the writing skills

of students at 17.646 and each additional 1 point on the critical thinking skills, will increase students' writing abilities at 0.955, while each additional 1 point on the mastery of grammar, will add students' writing ability of 0.071.

The effect of grammar mastery and critical thinking towards student's descriptive writing skill

From data description gained after analysing the correlation, we may get the coefficient of correlation which is stated by 0.942 and coefficient of determination stated by 88.6%. From the calculation by using SPSS version 16.0 for windows, it is proven that the coefficient of correlation is significant. It means that there is an effect of independent variables X_1 (grammar mastery) and X_2 (critical thinking) towards the dependent variable Y (student's descriptive writing skill). Refer to same calculation; we may drag a conclusion that grammar mastery contributes more influential than critical think towards descriptive writing skill since $t_{observed}$ value of it is more than 0.858. Indeed, grammar mastery has an important role to help a student understand the meaning of the sentence throughout writing skill. By having a set of grammar mastery, it does not mean that someone would be able to write the descriptive text automatically. It must be enhanced by critical thinking to study so that she/he would be able to jot down the descriptive text as well. Even though the effect of critical thinking is not as strong as grammar mastery; yet that would be an inner modality for a student to take an advanced activity in order to be able to write well.

Meanwhile, from the regression analysis we may get the linear regression equation as follows: $Y = 17.646 + 0.955 X_1 + 0.071 X_2$. According to the constant number stated by 17.646, it shown that at the lowest level of grammar mastery and critical thinking, it will be difficult for a student to achieve the skill in descriptive

writing. While scores of regressions coefficient stated consecutively by 0.955 and 0.071, they shown us about the affirmative correlation of independent variables X_1 (grammar mastery) and X_2 (critical thinking) towards dependent variable Y (student's descriptive writing skill), will affect the level of descriptive writing skill as many as 0.955 and each score increment for critical thinking level, will affect the level of descriptive writing skill as many as 0.071.

Having tabulated the linear regression by using SPSS version 16.0 for Windows, we attain that the regression line is linear. And from the calculation by using the same program, we also attain that the coefficient of regression is significant as well. It means that there is positive correlation among the independent variables X_1 (grammar mastery) and X_2 (critical thinking) towards the dependent variable Y (student's descriptive writing skill).

Based on explanation above, it can be concluded that both grammar mastery and critical thinking gave effects to the achievement of student's descriptive writing skill.

The effect of grammar mastery towards student's descriptive writing skill

From the hypothesis test, it is attained that Sig value is 0.000 and $t_{observed}$ is 26,037 while t_{table} is 2.00. Because Sig < 0.05 and $t_{observed} > tt_{able}$, as the consequence H_0 is rejected which means there is a significant effect of independent variable Y (Student's Descriptive Writing Skill). It can be concluded that grammar mastery gave effect to the achievement of student's descriptive writing skill.

There is No Effect of Critical Thinking towards Student's Descriptive Writing Skill

From the hypothesis test, it is attained that Sig value is 0.393 and $t_{observed}$ is 0.858, while t_{table} is 2.00. Because Sig $>$

0.05 and $t_{observed} > t_{table}$, as the consequence H_0 is accepted which means there is no significant effect of independent variable X_2 (critical thinking) towards the dependent variable Y (student's descriptive writing skill). It can be concluded that critical thinking did not give effect to achievement of student's descriptive writing skill.

CONCLUSION

Based on collecting data, processing and testing of hypotheses, it can be concluded as follows:

1. There are significant effects of grammar mastery and critical thinking towards student's descriptive writing skill. It is proven by the score $F_{observed} = 339.539$ and Sig. 0,000 < 0.05. It means that the higher the student's grammar mastery and the more responsive the student's critical thinking, the higher student's descriptive writing skill. This indicate that grammar mastery and critical thinking are two critical variables to be considered in explaining the increase of student's descriptive writing skill.
2. There is a significant effect of grammar mastery towards student's descriptive writing skill. It is proven by the score of $t_{observed} = 26.037$ and Sig. 0.000 < 0.05. It means that the higher the student's grammar mastery, the higher student's descriptive writing skill. Conversely, the lower the student's grammar mastery, the lower student's descriptive writing skill. Therefore, student's grammar mastery is an important variable to consider in predicting the student's descriptive writing skill.
3. There is no significant effect of critical thinking towards student's descriptive writing skill. It is proven by the score of $t_{observed} = 0.858$ and Sig. 0.393 > 0.05. It means that critical thinking is not important variable to consider in predicting student's descriptive writing skill.

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